



A CONTINUING EXPLORATION AND REVIEW OF THE WILLIAM DESMOND TAYLOR CASE

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BOOK REVIEW: A CAST OF KILLERS,
 BY SIDNEY D. KIRKPATRICK (DUTTON,
 1986). Reviewed by Bruce Long.

...

It is admittedly much easier to criticize a book than to write one. Kirkpatrick's book-length examination of the Taylor case, the first ever to be published, is truly welcome and should naturally be read by anyone with an interest in the case. Kirkpatrick has written an entertaining and marketable book; hopefully it will be successful enough to spawn more serious examinations into the case and the lives of those individuals involved.

The murder details given in the early chapters of *A Cast of Killers* are not intended to be accepted as factual. Rather, they are Vidor's recollection of the murder from the details in the newspapers or magazines; when Vidor later gains access to the police files he learns that some of these press details are erroneous. This was Kirkpatrick's intention. That the effort was not entirely successful is proved by the number of book reviews which again repeat the press errors of the early chapters as factual. Even the *American Film* extracts from the book fall into this error, because the portions of the book which rectify the errors were not included in the article.

For the record: The morning the body was found, Charles Eyton did not arrive before the police. Nobody was burning letters in the fireplace (there was no fireplace). Mabel Normand was not searching for her letters (her first return to the crime scene would be on Feb. 4, and she would search for her letters at that time). An overturned chair had not fallen across Taylor's legs.

The book makes constant reference to press reports but, with one exception, no specific

references are cited. There is an enormous difference between press reports published immediately after the murder and the reports published much later. The further away from the Taylor murder we get, time-wise, the more inaccuracies there are in press recaps of the case. Most recaps written more than a year after the case are virtually worthless unless they contain some genuine new information from an authentic source.

The book contains some material which appears to be inaccurate. It is possible that some of the following corrections may, in themselves, be inaccurate. Any firm evidence to that effect would be appreciated. The numbers in parentheses indicate the page numbers in *Cast of Killers* where the items are found. Some of them are found in interviews in the book and are not directly stated by Vidor/Kirkpatrick. In the analysis below, "official statement" refers to the statements taken by the District Attorney's office and reprinted in *King of Comedy*.¹

...

PERCEIVED INACCURACIES & CONTRADICTIONS

#1. No early press reports indicated any pornographic pictures of Taylor and famous actresses had been found. All such later reports were evidently magnified from the following press item reporting the estate sale of Taylor: (7)

District Attorney Woolwine
 yesterday...withheld from sale a
 number of pictures among the
 effects of William D. Taylor,
 murdered film director...There were

NOTES

¹See Mack Sennett and Cameron Shipp, *King of Comedy* (Doubleday, 1954).

some of young women in "art poses," the kind that Boston frowns upon. Some were exceedingly daring.²

#2. No early press reports told of a secret locked closet with a collection of women's lingerie, tagged with initials and dated. (7)

#3. There were early press reports implying that a nightgown had been found with the initials "M.M.M." The cumulative press evidence indicates that a nightgown did exist and had been the property of Taylor for some time before the murder, but the nightgown *had no initials on it*.

I consider this extract to be definitive and reliable: (6, 169, *et al*)

Herman Cline, former chief of detectives, who was one of the original investigators, recalled having found a garment "resembling a nightgown" in the Taylor apartment.

"But I am positive there were no initials on it," he declared...

"I was working on the case with Detective Ziegler," he said, "and the day following the murder we found a filmy flesh-colored gown in a dresser drawer in Taylor's bedroom. We also found several handkerchiefs bearing the initials M.M.M."

"We took the gown, handkerchiefs and a package of letters to the office of the late Thomas Lee Woolwine, then District Attorney, and turned them over to him."

"At the time I recall Woolwine as saying, 'I don't know how the gown will fit into the picture, as we cannot identify its owner. There isn't even a laundry mark on it'"

Cline added that he had no idea what had become of the exhibit.³

#4. No early press reports indicated Taylor visited Berger on the morning before the murder. All early press reports only mention an afternoon visit and a telephone call. (7)

#5. Some early press reports did indicate a substantial sum of money was withdrawn by Taylor and then re-deposited. However, these press reports

were soon retracted and an authoritative statement was made that no money had been withdrawn for several weeks prior to the murder.⁴ (7, 26 *et al*)

#6. The description Taylor's sister-in-law gave of her husband did not "fit uncannily that of Edward Sands." There was a drastic difference in age and physical appearance: (8)

Mrs. Deane-Tanner, when shown a photograph of Sands at her Monrovia home, pointed out points of dissimilarity...

Sands is short and stocky, with plump, round face. Dennis Deane-Tanner was slender like his brother... Besides, Mrs. Deane-Tanner explained, her husband's nose had been broken in athletics, which gave him a noticeable mark.⁵

#7. When Denis Deane Tanner disappeared in 1912, he left behind a wife and *two* children, not one. His daughters were named Muriel and Alice.⁶ (19)

#8. "Denis" Tanner, not "Dennis" Tanner. Virtually all press reports made this same spelling error. (20)

#9. Police never made any early claims that Denis Deane Tanner might have been Sands. (20)

#10. It was not in 1917 that Ethel May Harrison saw Taylor on the screen for the first time since he left her. She stated this took place in 1919⁷ There is very strong evidence that she knew Taylor was in Hollywood by 1915, but kept the information from her daughter.⁸ (20)

#11. No early press reports quoted Mrs. MacLean as stating the person she saw "had an effeminate walk" or seemed to be wearing heavy movie makeup. She was, however, quoted as stating the person "might have been a woman dressed in man's clothes."⁹ (22)

#12. The published coded letters, which Minter later admitted writing, were not signed "Mary." They were unsigned. (28)

#13. Mary *never* claimed to have been at Casa de Margarita on the night of the murder.

⁴See Los Angeles Express (February 17, 1922).

⁵Los Angeles Record (February 7, 1922).

⁶See Los Angeles Examiner (February 5, 1922).

⁷See New York Times (February 5, 1922).

⁸See Los Angeles Examiner (February 5, 1922) and New York Herald (February 6, 1922).

⁹Long Beach Telegram (February 6, 1922).

²Los Angeles Examiner (May 24, 1922).

³Los Angeles Times (February 4, 1937).

Whenever a specific residence was mentioned, she always claimed to have been at the house on Hobart.¹⁰ (29)

#14. None of the early press reports published within four years of the murder raised the question of Shelby's ownership of a gun. In fact it was eight months after the murder before any press report cast even a hint of suspicion in Shelby's direction.¹¹ Immediately following the murder, the press viewed Mary's involvement with Taylor as casting serious suspicion upon Marshall Neilan and Thomas Dixon. (29)

#15. Police never "granted the entire family complete exoneration from wrongdoing." Minter and Shelby demanded exoneration over and over, but it was never granted to them by those in charge of the investigation. The closest Minter came was in a 1930 interview with William Doran, who was involved in the original investigation, and stated: (29, *et al*)

"The investigation of the murder of William Desmond Taylor developed no evidence in any way implicating Mabel Normand or Mary Miles Minter..."

Judge Doran was asked specifically if he could be quoted as saying that the investigation under his direction had exonerated the two former famous film stars, who were close friends of the director.

"I do not feel it would be proper," Judge Doran replied, "for me to say exactly that, for it would be a personal opinion. I will reiterate, however, that there was no evidence to indicate either of these two young women participated in the crime."¹²

#16. The most reliable press report indicated Walter Kirby served in the American Army, not the Canadian. It also indicated that the reason why Kirby was released was not because he had an "airtight alibi", but because the farmer could not be positive in his identification. The hitchhiker he

picked up was unshaven; when Kirby was arrested he was clean-shaven.¹³ (31)

#17. The press reports indicated that it was not "another man named Walter Kirby" who was arrested the same month--it was the identical individual.¹⁴ (32)

#18. Otis Heffner's story said nothing about a fight between Taylor and a woman dressed like a man. In his clearly-fabricated story he blamed the killing on Mabel Normand.¹⁵ (32)

#19. Peavey did not die in a ghetto in Sacramento. He spent the last year of his life in the Napa State Hospital for the Insane.¹⁶ (33)

#20. Mabel Normand's dying statement "I wonder who killed poor Bill Taylor?" sounds like press fabrication. A month before Mabel's death, Julia Benson said Mabel never discusses the Taylor case,¹⁷ and all news of the latest flare-up was kept from her. Most of the Los Angeles papers quoted other "last words." (33)

#21. *Moving Picture World* was not a "fan rag;" it was the most highly respected trade journal in the motion picture industry. (35)

#22. Florence Vidor never acted under William Desmond Taylor's direction. (36)

#23. "The Sky Pilot" was released in 1921, well before Taylor was murdered. (37) At the time of the Taylor murder, there were already rumors that Colleen Moore was engaged to John McCormick, and was reportedly wearing his engagement ring.¹⁸

#24. Douglas Whitton has a copy of Taylor's birth certificate. It clearly states Taylor was born on April 26, 1872 -- not 1867. (40)

#25. The statement that Taylor never found the need for glasses is obviously false--one of the photographs in the book has him wearing glasses, and others have been published elsewhere.¹⁹ (42)

#26. Fanny Davenport did not sign Taylor as her leading man; her leading man was her husband, Malcolm MacDowell. Taylor only played supporting roles.(43)

#27. Taylor did not "inexplicably" leave Davenport. He was with the Davenport company

¹³See *Santa Ana Register* (March 18, 1922). This was the only newspaper to directly interview the rancher.

¹⁴See *Sacramento Bee* (March 18, 1922) and *Los Angeles Examiner*(May 3, 1922).

¹⁵See *Los Angeles Record* (January 6, 1930).

¹⁶See *Los Angeles Times* (May 11, 1937).

¹⁷See *Los Angeles Herald* (January 14, 1930).

¹⁸See *Pantomime* (March 18, 1922).

¹⁹See Jonathan Goodman, *Acts of Murder* (Harrap, 1986), p. 86.

¹⁰See, for example, *Los Angeles Herald* (August 14, 1923).

¹¹See *Los Angeles Times* (October 4, 1922).

¹²*Los Angeles Herald* (January 8, 1930).

until she died on September 26, 1898, and the troupe disbanded. (43)

#28. The story that Taylor had gone to prison in England to protect a woman's honor, did not come from a Klondike miner; it came from H. M. Horkheimer, the president of Balboa Studios.²⁰ (43)

#29. There were several reports that Taylor's finances were not "in perfect order" when he deserted his wife: (45)

...[Taylor] told Mr. Morrison ...that he had left New York because of an overwhelming burden of debt he had contracted while an art dealer in New York.²¹

Financial and other troubles were pressing hard upon W. C. Deane-Tanner at the time of his disappearance..."Pete's" habits, especially his extravagances, were held to blame...Pete confided that he had borrowed a great deal of money from Mr. Braker [the multi-millionaire realty operator and uncle of his wife]...but he was confident he and Mrs. Tanner would be remembered handsomely in Mr. Braker's will. Pete's hopes...were completely dashed in the summer of 1908, when Mr. Braker died suddenly and his will, filed shortly before Pete's disappearance, contained a brief clause to this effect: "To W. C. D. Tanner, I leave and bequeath the amounts of money owing to me by him."...At the time "Pete" Tanner deserted his wife and six-year-old daughter in October, 1908, he was in serious financial straits, owing thousands of dollars to Wilson Marshall...and to others.²²

#30. That Taylor experienced "memory losses" was attested to by others beside his wife. One of his former business associates reportedly stated: (46)

"We all had noticed the facial neuralgia which distorted 'Pete's' face so, and he had several mental lapses during the time I knew him. We all agreed with Mrs.

Deane-Tanner at the time of his disappearance that he had wandered away while seized with one of these spells."²³

#31. The romance between Neva Gerber and Taylor was certainly more than just "studio publicity." They went together from Balboa to Favorite Players to American Film. While at American in Santa Barbara, Taylor lived in the same house with Neva and her mother.²⁴ Taylor continued to give Neva presents of cash and automobiles up until the time of his death.²⁵ (52)

#32. Mary Miles Minter was not at American while Taylor was employed there; he left in October 1915 and Mary did not arrive until early in 1916. Neva Gerber was there during his entire American tenure. (52)

#33. As to whether or not Taylor made any "truly close, lasting friendships" while at American, it depends upon the definition of the term. His cameraman for the later episodes of "The Diamond From the Sky" was Homer Scott, who would remain Taylor's cameraman for three years. Scott went with Taylor to Morosco-Pallas, and remained part of Taylor's unit until Taylor entered the military. At the time of Taylor's death, Scott was cameraman for Mabel Normand; Taylor may have recommended Scott to her. (52)

#34. The rumor that the blacksmith in "Captain Alvarez" was Denis Tanner was indeed mentioned in the papers, attributed to an anonymous New Yorker who stated he recognized him.²⁶ (53-4)

#35. Wallace Reid's drug problem reportedly began in 1919 during the filming of "Valley of the Giants." Taylor last directed Reid in 1917 in "Big Timber." Reid had no drug problem when Taylor directed him. (58)

#36. Moreno was having a contract dispute with Vitagraph, and wanted Taylor's assistance to arbitrate it. Moreno's statement to the press indicates the scheduled meeting with Taylor on the morning after his death did not involve Woolwine at all. Moreno detailed the meetings he had with Taylor in the week prior to his death. (60)

"...I saw Mr. Taylor next at the Lasky studios, Monday morning at 10 o'clock. I had an

²³New York Herald (February 6, 1922).

²⁴See New York Evening World (February 3, 1922).

²⁵See Los Angeles Examiner (February 6, 1922).

²⁶See New York American (February 13, 1922).

²⁰See Los Angeles Examiner (February 17, 1922).

²¹Santa Barbara Press (February 5, 1922).

²²New York American (February 13, 1922).

appointment with him to go to the Vitagraph studios, on a matter of business importance to me. Chester Bennett of the Brunton studios, was with us. We were together until 12:30 p.m. that day.

"We were unable to see the people we wanted that day. The appointment had to be made over again. I called Mr. Taylor again, Tuesday at the Lasky lot, but I did not get to talk to him, I was informed that he was out on location on Mt. Lowe. Tuesday, which was the day before the murder, I could not get in touch with him.

"Wednesday night Mr. Taylor called me at the [L. A. Athletic] club...It was about 7 o'clock when Mr. Taylor called...Mr. Taylor then made an appointment for Thursday morning, at 10 o'clock.²⁷

"...we arranged that I should call for Mr. Taylor, at the Lasky studio, about 10 o'clock Thursday morning...Mr. Taylor was to go with me to the Vitagraph studio, on a matter of personal business."²⁸

#37. The careers of Julia Crawford Ivers and Douglas MacLean had both peaked prior to the Taylor murder. Ivers' career went almost straight downhill.²⁹ (61)

#38. Taylor was in uniform for approximately 9 months, not 15 months. He reported for active duty in August 1918 and returned in May 1919. He arrived in England on November 18, 1918. On December 4, 1918 he was commissioned Lieutenant, serial #F-56979, and was assigned to the Expeditionary Force Canteen of the Royal Army Service Corps. He was soon sent to France and stationed at Dunkirk, where he was second in command under Major Meghar. Taylor's duty was to supervise shipments of food and supplies being forwarded by rail to troop units inside France. Upon his release from active duty, he was a Captain in the British Reserve Corps. (65)

#39. The photograph of Taylor and the three army buddies was printed in the L.A. Times,

along with another photo of the same individuals.³⁰ If one of them had been Denis, surely his wife would have recognized him. When the photograph was printed in the San Francisco Chronicle, the soldiers were all identified (and one of them was interviewed). The name of the soldier who allegedly looks like Denis, is Sgt. Hawkins.³¹ (68)

#40. No six-page photo spread announcing the birth of Realart appears in any issue of **Photoplay**. An ad such as the one described would have appeared in a trade paper, not a fan magazine. (71)

#41. Ads for the birth of Realart did not appear until mid-1919. (71)

#42. Huckleberry Finn was the first film directed by Taylor after his return from military service and was made prior to "Anne of Green Gables." (72)

#43. There was indeed a public explanation given as to why the team of Minter and Taylor was broken up: Taylor was promoted. In the film industry at that time, there could be only one "star" in any film, whether actor or director. At the end of 1919 Taylor was promoted, given his own producing unit and given "the name above the title." (Two of the other stellar directors of the time were D. W. Griffith and Cecil B. DeMille.) Taylor and Minter could not both have top billing in the same film, yet each of their contracts now required top billing. Hence, their professional separation.³² (72)

#44. **Round the Room** does not state that Taylor's car which was stolen by Sands was a Packard. Press items published after the murder indicated that after the stolen car was recovered in a wrecked condition it was repaired and repainted, and was in Taylor's possession at the time of his death.³³ The two automobiles in his estate were a McFarlan and a Chandler. It had to be one of these two cars which was stolen by Sands. (75)

#45. Although the merchandise stolen by Sands was pawned under the name of William Deane Tanner, there is no mention in the early press reports that the envelope sent to Taylor was addressed that way. (75)

#46. Peavey testified at the inquest that he always left and entered Taylor's residence by the front door, not the back door. Before he left each

²⁷Los Angeles Times (February 5, 1922).

²⁸Los Angeles Examiner (February 5, 1922).

²⁹See Douglas Whitton, "Mystery Woman Director," Classic Images (July 1985).

³⁰See Los Angeles Times (February 4, 1922).

³¹See San Francisco Chronicle (February 7, 1922).

³²See Los Angeles Herald (December 18, 1919).

³³See Los Angeles Record (February 2, 1922) and Los Angeles Examiner (February 5, 1922).

evening he would fasten a latch on the back door and leave a key in the lock, preventing outside entry through that door. (88)

#47. If Taylor's cigarette case had been stolen by Sands and been missing for "many months," how could it be inscribed "Christmas 1921"? There were less than two months between Christmas 1921 and the murder, and Sands' last robbery took place weeks before Christmas. (88)

#48. According to Moreno's statement, above, he had been trying to get in touch with Taylor for two days, finally contacting him around 7:00 p.m. on the night of the murder. He therefore could not have met with Taylor at the Athletic Club on the morning of that day. (89)

#49. On the day Taylor was killed, C. B. DeMille was on board the *Aquitania*, en route from Europe to New York. He was not in Los Angeles.³⁴ (89)

#50. Two weeks prior to Taylor's death, Julia Crawford Ivers began work away from Paramount. She had been given the assignment of writing the scenario for a Constance Talmadge film and was working at United Studios.³⁵ The project was abandoned after Ivers was prostrated by Taylor's death. (89)

#51. According to Mabel Normand's official statement to the D.A., her maid told her Taylor had sent his chauffeur over with a book from Parker's, and had also made a book purchase at Robinson's for her to pick up at his place.³⁶ In her lengthy *Liberty* interview, Mabel stated that the two books she picked up from Taylor were *Rosa Mundl* and a commentary on Nietzsche.³⁷ She also mentioned *Rosa Mundl* in an interview published in the *L.A. Examiner*.³⁸ The employees of C. C. Parker's Bookstore were interviewed after the murder; they remembered Taylor and his purchase, *The Home Book of Verse*.³⁹ Clearly this was the book sent to Mabel's home by his chauffeur, while the two books from Robinson's were the books she picked up at his place. She explicitly denied receiving a volume of Freud from Taylor at

that time.⁴⁰ Where did Freud come from? The answer is easy to deduce. In her *Liberty* interview, Mabel says she had her volume of Freud with her when she visited Taylor. Mabel's initial press interviews, made on the day the body was discovered, did not name the books Taylor had given her; but she did mention Taylor's joke when he took her to her car and saw the *Police Gazette* there—he jokingly contrasted the *Police Gazette* with the volume of Freud. The reporters naturally assumed that the volume of Freud had been just given to her by Taylor, and several of them reported it that way—they were clearly wrong. (90)

#52. At the First National Bank he did not deposit \$2300 in cash. The most reliable press reports state that the deposit was in the form of checks, including two \$800 paychecks.⁴¹ (90)

#53. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the dance class he attended was at the Payne Dancing Academy on Orange St., not Wilshire. His regular instructor, Mrs. Waybright gave him his lesson, and she commented on his behavior. She said he wanted to take up the Tango at his next lesson, but spent this lesson brushing up on some old steps.⁴² (90)

#54. Taylor's last production was not "The Top of New York." "The Green Temptation" was the last film Taylor made. "Top of New York" was released last, because it was a Realart film whereas "The Green Temptation" was a Paramount film, and the Realart films were on a more delayed releasing schedule. (100)

#55. May "Busch," not May "Bush." (108)

#56. Mabel Normand never went to Europe during her Goldwyn years; her first European trip took place after Taylor's murder. No fan magazines or newspapers during her Goldwyn years reported she was in Europe. (109)

#57. No newspaper reports published in the week after the murder made any report whatsoever alleging that Mabel had been searching for her letters at the bungalow when the police arrived at the murder scene. (114)

#58. In her official statement to the D.A., Mabel stated that she had no idea who was on the phone with Taylor when she arrived. Press reports also stated in several interviews with her, that she did not know who Taylor was talking to. There was one solitary early interview which quoted her as

³⁴See *Los Angeles Times* (February 4, 1922).

³⁵See *New York Telegraph* (January 22 and February 5, 1922).

³⁶Also see *Los Angeles Times* (February 3, 1922).

³⁷See Sidney Sutherland, "Mabel Normand—Comedienne and Madcap," *Liberty* (September 27, 1930).

³⁸See *Los Angeles Examiner* (February 11, 1922).

³⁹See *Los Angeles Record* (February 4, 1922).

⁴⁰See *Los Angeles Examiner* (February 11, 1922).

⁴¹See *Los Angeles Examiner* (February 15, 1922) and *Los Angeles Express* (February 17, 1922).

⁴²See *Los Angeles Times* (February 7, 1922).

stating it was Berger, but that statement is clearly "enhanced." Peavey is also quoted in that same paper as stating that Berger had telephoned before Mabel's arrival, and the reporter had obviously interpolated the information into Mabel's interview, particularly since the reporters present from the other papers made no mention of it. It is not at all certain that Taylor was talking to Berger when Mabel arrived. The Los Angeles Examiner interviewed Berger and reported the phone conversation took place between 5:30 and 6:30.⁴³ And Antonio Moreno's statement, above, indicated his phone call with Taylor took place at 7:00, which is when Mabel arrived. (116)

#59. Taylor's alleged premonition did appear in one early press report, but the statement was clearly fabricated. As soon as the report appeared, Mabel gave an interview explicitly denying it: (116)

"I wish to deny also the statement attributed to me that Mr. Taylor had told me of premonition of his death," added Miss Normand. "I never heard him mention any fear for his life or fear of any person or persons."⁴⁴

#60. Sennett was not with Mabel Normand on the morning after the murder. He sent his studio publicity agent, Arch MacArthur to handle the situation. Sennett went into seclusion and did not emerge in public for two weeks. (117)

#61. There were many divergent accounts of how and when Taylor and Minter first met. Kirkwood later stated he introduced them to each other on the American lot.⁴⁵ There were a number of social events where both of them were undeniably present, such as the Club of Forty dinner-dance held on October 31, 1917.⁴⁶ But from the written statement made by Minter in August 1923 it is clear that she did not remember any of the meetings which had taken place before the

filming of "Anne of Green Gables" in 1919.⁴⁷ (129)

#62. Margaret died in 1939, not 1937. The date is correctly given later in the book. (131)

#63. Ike St. Johns was secretary and campaign manager for Mayor Snyder, but Snyder lost his bid for re-election in 1921. At the time of the Taylor murder, Cryer was Mayor. A few months prior to the murder, Ike St. Johns was reportedly called as a Grand Jury witness to testify about political corruption in the Snyder administration.⁴⁸ Ike St. Johns was not working for the Mayor's office at the time of the murder. (144)

#64. The "I love you" letter printed in the photo section is obviously a forgery. A photograph of the actual letter was printed in the press shortly after the murder; the wording is the same, but the letterhead, layout and handwriting is different.⁴⁹ The handwriting on the real letter is identical with Minter's handwriting which appears on the photograph of hers which was found in Taylor's bungalow.⁵⁰ (Photo insert)

#65. The photograph identified as Faith MacLean is actually Kathlyn Williams.⁵¹ (Photo insert)

#66. The photograph identified as "Sands" is actually Harry Fellows. Sands was never Taylor's chauffeur. The photograph was indeed published and erroneously identified as Sands, but Fellows immediately came forward and stated it was himself and not Sands in the photo.⁵² (Photo insert)

#67. One photograph of the Shelby-Minter family is identified as having been taken at Casa de Margarita "c. 1919," but the family did not move into Casa de Margarita until April 1921.⁵³ In 1919 the family lived in Santa Barbara, New York and, at

⁴⁷See Los Angeles Times (August 15, 1923).

⁴⁸See Los Angeles Express (October 13, 14 and 17, 1921).

⁴⁹See Los Angeles Examiner (February 7, 1922), San Francisco Examiner (February 8, 1922), American Weekly (February 25, 1940) or Classic Images (Winter 1977) for photos of the real letter.

⁵⁰See Los Angeles Examiner (February 4, 1937).

⁵¹Genuine photographs of Faith MacLean can be seen in Picture-Play (May 1922) and Movie Weekly (February 14, 1925).

⁵²See Los Angeles Examiner (February 17, 1922).

⁵³See Los Angeles Express (April 27, 1921) and Los Angeles Times (April 24, 1921).

⁴³See Los Angeles Examiner (February 15, 1922).

⁴⁴San Francisco Examiner (February 4, 1922).

⁴⁵See Los Angeles Examiner (May 22, 1937).

⁴⁶See New York Telegraph (November 11, 1917).

year's end, in the Mathewson residence on Fremont in Los Angeles. (Photo insert)

#68. Mary described a gas station robbery in Taylor's neighborhood by three youths on the night Taylor was killed; the book implies no such robbery actually took place. Although not as close as Mary claimed, the following reported robbery was still within walking distance of Taylor's residence: (149, 153)

[After giving the details of a robbery that took place at 10 p.m.]... Earlier in the evening...three bandits held up an oil filling station at 601 South Catalina Street and robbed William Barer, the manager, of \$100.⁵⁴

#69. Douglas MacLean did not live in the bungalow directly opposite Taylor. He lived in #406-B, which was the bungalow next door to Taylor. MacLean's bungalow faced Alvarado.⁵⁵ (164) The diagram is likewise in error regarding the location of the MacLean residence.

#70. The book reports that Jessurum (sic) and MacLean stated to the police that Taylor's body was found with one arm extended—the body was not "laid out." But Jessurum later returned to the scene with Woolwine and a posed photo was taken in the exact position he purportedly first saw the body. Both arms were at Taylor's sides.⁵⁶ Douglas MacLean stated, in his official statement: (164)

"...He was lying flat on his back, his feet separated a little, his hands at his side, perfectly flat on his back. I said to Mrs. MacLean, later on, 'He looked just like a dummy in a department store, so perfect, so immaculate.'"

#71. The statement that Taylor had keys which fit no known locks did not come from the police but from the person in charge of administering Taylor's estate:

In an effort to locate William Desmond Taylor's lost will Public Administrator Frank Bryson Friday began a search of safety

deposit boxes in Los Angeles' 100 banks and bank branches. "I have some of Taylor's keys," Bryson said, "but I don't know what they fit." The keys were tried out on several safety deposit boxes in downtown banks Thursday but found not to fit.⁵⁷

#72. The coroner's report states that the bullet ... "passed out of the chest on the right side of the middle line, posterior to the right collar bone, and entered the tissues of the neck..."

The bullet did not actually strike the collar bone. (168)

#73. By the time Mary arrived, the "EXTRA" newspapers were indeed on the streets. A telegram had been sent at 10:08 a.m. which referred to newspaper accounts of the killing.⁵⁸ Mary later stated it was around 11:00 a.m. when she was notified by her mother that Taylor was dead.⁵⁹ (169)

#74. Minter's presence at the bungalow that morning was reported in several local papers and by several wire services. The Los Angeles Record even quoted her comments at the scene.⁶⁰ (169)

#75. The existence of the blonde hairs found on Taylor was initially kept quiet by the police. But in 1926 the briefcase belonging to Asa Keyes was stolen by Hearst reporters, and the existence of the hairs became widespread public knowledge. The banner headline from the Los Angeles Examiner on March 26, 1926 read: BLONDE HAIRS CLEW IN TAYLOR CASE. (170)

#76. The rumor that the police found a closet full of women's underwear did not originate from the studios. The rumor grew from statements made by Henry Peavey and Earl Tiffany⁶¹: (173)

#77. Denis Deane Tanner had indeed been an employee of Taylor's. But after Taylor deserted his wife, Denis went to work for another store across town.⁶² (175)

#78. The police did not feel obliged to comment on all the wild stories which were appearing in print after the murder. But they did

⁵⁴Los Angeles Express (February 2, 1922)

⁵⁵See Los Angeles Examiner (February 3, 1922), Los Angeles Express (February 3, 1922), Los Angeles Examiner (February 6, 1922), Los Angeles Herald (February 9, 1922), Los Angeles Examiner (February 12, 1922) and King of Comedy.

⁵⁶See Los Angeles Examiner (February 11, 1922).

⁵⁷Los Angeles Record (February 10, 1922).

⁵⁸See Denver Post (February 26, 1922).

⁵⁹See Los Angeles Times (August 15, 1923).

⁶⁰See Los Angeles Record (February 2, 1922).

⁶¹See Los Angeles Times (February 6, 1922).

⁶²See New York American (February 13, 1922).

discredit the theory that Sands and Denis were the same person: (176)

Detectives ridiculed a theory advanced today that Sands may have been Dennis Tanner...Tanner, if alive, would be considerably more than 40, it was said, while Sand's age is 25.⁶³

And years later, when the theory resurfaced, Buron Fitts stated:

"...the [finger]prints of [Denis] Deane-Tanner and Sands are definitely of two different men."⁶⁴

#79. No early published accounts made any statement to the effect that Taylor had met with Berger in his bungalow on the day he was killed. (181)

#80. Berger met with Taylor in the afternoon, when Shelby called looking for Mary. Mary claimed to have been home reading a book in the evening. These are two different periods of time. Taylor reportedly left Berger's office around 4:00 p.m.⁶⁵ (181)

#81. In 1926, Minter and Shelby were certainly not "declared innocent without a trial" and "officially exonerated from blame." In 1930, Shelby issued a written statement recalling the 1926 meeting with Keyes:(184)

"...My attorney and I invited his questioning me, thereupon demanding a statement vindicating me. His statement was promised within three days, but I was unable to get this satisfaction."

And Keyes, referring to the 1926 episode, replied:

"I exonerated no one in the case and refused to do so until the guilty person was arrested and prosecuted."⁶⁶

#82. Keyes did not wait four months after Charlotte Whitney's testimony before "deciding" to question Shelby. Shelby went to Louisiana and then to New York; as soon as she returned to L.A., Keyes did question her. (188)

#83. According to newspaper reports there were over three hundred written confessions received

within 5 weeks of the murder, not one year.⁶⁷ These reports were obviously enhanced—a much more plausible report stated that the 300 figure included letters from people who "know" who the murderer is; in other words, the figure includes tips, hunches and purported visions by psychics.⁶⁸ (192)

#84. Cahill reportedly states that every time Mabel told her story of that evening she said that Taylor had "received" the telephone call; but in her official statement to the D. A. she makes no mention of whether Taylor made the call or received it. (213) The early press statements also make no mention that the call was "received."

#85. Cahill reportedly states that it was very strange for Taylor's door to have been open when Mabel arrived; it was far too cold to have the door open. But in her Liberty interview Mabel states:

"A peculiarity the director had was that he never closed his front door during the day and seldom at night..."⁶⁹

Taylor's favorite sports were golf, hunting and camping; I suspect he had a touch of claustrophobia and that is why his door was usually open. In any event, it was Taylor's normal behavior to have it open. (213)

#86. Mary Miles Minter was not present at Taylor's inquest; she was in seclusion. (214)

#87. The book concludes that "obviously" there never was a mysterious doctor who stated Taylor died of a stomach hemorrhage. But Eyton told of the doctor, under oath, at the inquest; he volunteered the information, it was not given in response to a question. It is very doubtful that he would perjure himself unless he were asked a specific question to which he felt compelled to lie. Also, the doctor was mentioned in the official statement made by Douglas MacLean. Naturally, once the doctor later learned of his mistaken diagnosis, he would not be anxious to step forward and identify himself as the incompetent doctor at the scene. (219)

#88. The press evidence leads to the conclusion that the suicide in Connecticut was not Sands. In 1926, Keyes took a trip across country investigating several leads on the case. Upon his return it was reported:

...[Keyes] visited Bridgeport, Conn., where police told him that three years ago Captain Jim Bean of the Los Angeles police department had investigated the

⁶³Chicago Herald-Examiner (February 8, 1922).

⁶⁴Los Angeles Times (February 3, 1937).

⁶⁵See Los Angeles Express (February 17, 1922).

⁶⁶Los Angeles Examiner (December 24, 1929).

⁶⁷See Los Angeles Examiner (March 6, 1922).

⁶⁸See Boston Herald (March 8, 1922).

⁶⁹Liberty (September 27, 1930).

death of a man there thought at one time to have been Edward F. Sands, former valet to Taylor, and the suspected slayer. Bean at that time learned for certain that the man buried in Bridgeport was not Sands, and made a formal report.⁷⁰

This is obviously a reference to the same corpse; Darien and Bridgeport are both in Fairfield County. (219-20)

#89. Press evidence indicates the first Minter-Shelby lawsuit over the money earned by Mary was filed in 1925 and not three months after the murder.⁷¹ (251)

#90. The book claims Les Henry stated that all his improper financial transactions were done with Shelby's knowledge and consent, but press evidence indicates Les Henry admitted to virtual stealing of the Shelby money.⁷² (252)

#91. As stated on page 131, Mary's Paramount contract terminated in 1923, not 1922. (255)

#92. Mary did not move to New York until August 1924.⁷³ When her grandmother became ill in April 1925, she returned to Los Angeles and lived in Casa de Margarita with the family for several months before returning to New York again.⁷⁴ (255)

#93. Press evidence indicates Mary did not arrive in Los Angeles three hours after Julia Miles had died; Mary was making preparations to leave for Los Angeles when word of her grandmother's death came. Shelby ordered a quick funeral, and Mary was not even present for the funeral.⁷⁵ (257)

#94. Casa de Margarita was not sold by Shelby in 1926. It was part of the Paris settlement with Mary. On January 24, 1927, an agreement was signed whereby Mary received \$150,000 in bonds plus ownership of Casa de Margarita in settlement of all claims against her mother.⁷⁶ The

mansion was sold by the bank to collect unpaid mortgage payments in 1932.⁷⁷ (258)

#95. Shelby did not sail to Europe prior to Margaret's marriage to Fillmore; the marriage took place in May 1925, a year before Shelby sailed for Europe, and Charlotte was present at the wedding.⁷⁸ Margaret did not marry Fillmore because she was "cut off financially." (258)

#96. The Margaret/Flynn marriage was not motive for murder. Contrary to what the book reports, this is the true sequence of events: Margaret is committed by Shelby in 1936.⁷⁹ After her release, Margaret sues Shelby in October 1936, and is estranged from her for the remainder of her life. Margaret and Flynn are married in March 1937; a few days after the marriage both are arrested on charges of intoxication.⁸⁰ In April 1937 the marriage is annulled—not because of anything Shelby does, but because Flynn is already married.⁸¹ The Margaret/Flynn marriage has no effect on the estranged relationship between Margaret and Shelby. (258-9)

#97. Peavey's last statements to the press did not claim that an actress and her mother killed Taylor—only an actress. From the context, that actress is clearly Mabel Normand.⁸² (287)

#98. Peavey died in 1931, not 1937.⁸³ (287)

#99. The book contends that Mary was in Taylor's bungalow during Mabel's last visit. Not likely. In 1930 Peavey declared that Mabel killed Taylor. Peavey expressed the same belief in 1922, shortly after the murder, during his "kidnaping" by Hearst reporters.⁸⁴ Peavey had good reasons, from his perspective, to believe Mabel Normand was guilty. His 1930 statement was essentially an unburdening of his conscience. If Mary was in the house, I find it inconceivable that Peavey would not have mentioned it in 1930 or that he would be so certain about Mabel Normand's guilt. In Peavey's official statement made in 1922, he stated that Mary only visited Taylor's bungalow once, shortly after he first began working for Taylor months ago.

⁷⁰Los Angeles Record (March 30, 1926).

⁷¹See Los Angeles Times (January 30, 1925).

⁷²See Los Angeles Times (December 23, 1932) and (May 22, 1936).

⁷³See Los Angeles Examiner (August 4, 1924).

⁷⁴See Los Angeles Times (April 25, 1925).

⁷⁵See Photoplay (February 1926) and Los Angeles Examiner (February 6, 1927).

⁷⁶See Los Angeles Examiner (May 29, 1936).

⁷⁷See Los Angeles Times (December 28, 1932).

⁷⁸See Los Angeles Times (May 27, 1925).

⁷⁹See Los Angeles Times (September 4, 1937).

⁸⁰See Los Angeles Herald-Express (March 20, 1937).

⁸¹See Los Angeles Herald-Express (April 26, 1937).

⁸²See Los Angeles Record (January 7, 1930).

⁸³See Los Angeles Times (May 11, 1937).

⁸⁴See San Francisco Examiner (February 21, 1922).

In 1930, Peavey declared that he had been ordered to keep quiet about the argument he witnessed between Mabel and Taylor. If Peavey had also been ordered to keep quiet about Mary's presence in the house, surely he would have said so at this time. I also find it inconceivable that Mary could have been in the house without Peavey knowing about it. At the end of Mabel's last visit Taylor asked to take her out for dinner; she declined. Would he have asked her out to dinner if Mary had been waiting upstairs for so long? As for the blonde hairs found on Taylor's jacket, there is press evidence to indicate they resulted from a meeting earlier in the day. When Mary was interviewed after Taylor's death, the press commented on her bad cold. When Berger was interviewed by the press she recalled meeting with Taylor on the afternoon prior to his death, and inquiring to him how Mary was; Taylor reportedly had replied, "She has a touch of tonsillitis and temperament."⁸⁵ I conclude from this that Taylor and Mary met earlier, and the hairs were placed on his collar earlier in the day. (267)

#100. The book contends that Mary knew her mother killed Taylor. Oh? Mary's infatuation/love for Taylor stayed with her for the remainder of her life. In the mid-20s, there was a fierce public battle waged over the Minter finances. During the 1926 flare-up of the case, Shelby was very scared that Mary might tell Keyes something out of spite; Leslie Henry quoted Shelby as stating:

"I don't know what that girl will tell Keyes...All she is doing is trying to ruin me, in addition to the financial situation."⁸⁶

Yet, in all the public statements made against her mother, and in the statement taken by the D.A., Mary made no statement incriminating her mother—as would later be done by Margaret. In 1927, there was a settlement between Mary and Shelby, and an actual reconciliation. During the 1937 Grand Jury investigation, and in interviews given throughout her life, Mary defended her mother. I do not believe for one minute that Mary would have reconciled with Shelby if she thought her guilty of killing the love of her life.

#101. The book also contends that Peavey was soliciting young boys for Taylor when he was arrested. Granting, for the moment, Taylor's homosexuality, he would not likely use such a risky method (also, it is out of character). In one interview with Mabel Normand, recalling her last

meeting with Taylor, she states that Taylor told her he would stand by Peavey if he were innocent, but if he were guilty he would have to fire him.⁸⁷ Peavey was known to be very gregarious, with a high voice and some effeminate mannerisms. Probably he stopped in the park on the way home and was merely talking to some boys when a bigoted policeman spotted him and arrested him without due cause, in an effort to "clean up" the exclusive neighborhood. (231)

The book presents hearsay evidence of Taylor's homosexuality, but ignores even stronger evidence of Taylor's love for Mabel Normand—particularly the 1922 statements of Fay Borden⁸⁸ and Henry Peavey.⁸⁹

...

The book does present some interesting new information about the case. But in view of the material documented above, and the book's failure to cite sources, how reliable is that new information? Did Taylor really send flowers to Minter on the day of his death? Did Margaret, in Fillmore vs. Shelby, really admit to having given false testimony? Did Leslie Henry really quote Shelby as stating Keyes would require more [payoff] money than Woolwine? Documentation of sources for these and several other items would greatly be appreciated.

It is incredible that with access to the transcripts in the police file, so little of those transcripts would be found in the book. There was much more verbatim use of official transcripts in Sennett's *King of Comedy*, but Sennett only used the 1922 material. Those unpublished transcripts need to be made fully accessible to the public as soon as possible.

...

The "killer" named in *Cast of Killers* has been named before. Anyone wishing to accept Kirkpatrick's "proof" is free to do so. I do not. I am unconvinced that Shelby fired the shot that killed Taylor, or was in any way involved in his death. It would not be surprising in the least if some future book would present an equally strong case "proving" that Taylor was killed by someone else.

...

The Taylor case is still open.

...

⁸⁵Los Angeles Record (February 11, 1922).

⁸⁶Deposition made by Leslie Henry (July 11, 1933).

⁸⁷See Los Angeles Express (February 2, 1922).

⁸⁸See San Francisco Chronicle (February 11, 1922)

⁸⁹See Los Angeles Times (February 6, 1922)

Anyone with a serious interest in the Taylor case is naturally frustrated by A Cast of Killers' lack of notes and failure to include an index. The following hastily-compiled index is not complete, but perhaps others may also find it useful:

INDEX

- Berger, Marjorie 7, 33, 90, 116, 124, 177, 181, 189, 191, 213-4, 237, 245, 253, 256-7, 267
 Blue, Monte 52, 145, 187
 Cato, Ray 215-22
 Dumas, Verne 23, 165
 Eaton, Chauncey 154, 186-7, 191-2
 Eyton, Charles 22, 27, 33, 57-8, 66, 89, 165-7, 216-8, 227, 229-30, 231
 Fellows, Harry 165, 166-7
 Fellows, Howard 75, 89, 165, 167, 179, 181
 Fields, Harry 194
 Flitts, Buron 191, 234-9, 243-5, 258-9, 268-70, 285
 Flynn, Emmett 258-9, 286
 Gerber, Neva 52, 166
 Gillon, Hazel 5, 22, 142, 166, 268
 Green, Tom 30
 Harrington, Neil 165
 Harrison, Ethel May 19-21, 44, 46-8
 Hartley 5, 194
 Heffner, Otis 32, 194
 Henry, Leslie 245, 251-5, 258
 Hopkins, George 61-2, 102, 223-32, 281, 283, 287
 Hoyt, Arthur 165, 184
 Ivers, Julia Crawford 61, 89, 165-6
 Jessurum, E. C. 22, 164, 167
 Jewett, Christine 165, 180, 267
 Keyes, Asa 33, 186, 188, 191, 204, 239, 244, 254-5, 269-70
 Kirby, Walter 31-2, 193
 Kirkwood, James 50, 52, 59-60, 89, 122-3, 145, 180, 227, 253, 265-6, 280
 Knoblock, Edward 73-5, 179
 MacLean, Douglas 5, 59-62, 74, 96, 164-7, 169
 MacLean, Faith 5, 22-3, 31, 33, 80, 142-3, 150, 166-7, 169, 180, 219
 Maigne, Charles 165
 Miles, Julia 190, 256-7, 267, 269
 Minter, Mary Miles 7-8, 15-6, 20, 28-30, 33, 52, 59, 64, 71-2, 89, 102, 115-6, 123, 125-33, 136-41, 143-51, 153, 159, 166, 169-70, 172-3, 179-81, 183-91, 194-5, 203-6, 212-4, 221-2, 225-7, 230, 235-9, 244-9, 251-3, 255-8, 265-70, 275-83, 286
 Moreno, Antonio 59-61, 78-80, 89, 95, 122-3, 154, 180, 185
 Neillan, Marshall 16, 50, 58-61, 89, 105-6, 130, 137, 180, 185, 227, 237, 266-7
 Normand, Mabel 3-4, 7, 15, 22, 26-9, 33, 51, 71-3, 87-8, 90-1, 106-11, 113-18, 120-24, 139, 140, 153-4, 165-6, 169, 173, 178-80, 194-5, 210-14, 235, 237, 267
 Peavey, Henry 3-4, 7, 15, 22, 26, 33, 75, 88, 139, 163-4, 167, 176-7, 179-80, 191, 230-1, 287
 Purvlance, Edna 22, 27, 80, 110, 165
 Reid, Wallace 58
 Sands, Edward 8, 20, 26, 30, 54-5, 74-6, 79-80, 90, 95, 140, 150, 153, 157-8, 160, 175-6, 179-80, 194, 218-22, 230, 234-5
 Sennett, Mack 107, 115-8
 Shelby, Charlotte 8, 15, 26, 33, 126-32, 136-46, 154, 166, 181, 184, 186-92, 194-5, 203-6, 212, 221-2, 225-6, 228, 230, 236-9, 244-9, 251-9, 264-70, 280-82, 285-6
 Shelby, Margaret 126-31, 144, 188-9, 191, 251, 254, 257-9, 264-9, 277, 286
 Smith, Jim 189, 257, 268
 St. Johns, Adela Rogers 102, 131, 141-7, 149, 166, 226, 268, 278, 281, 288
 Stockdale, Carl 131, 189, 190, 254, 257, 266, 268, 270
 Swanson, Gloria 15, 56-62, 102, 123, 178, 185, 223, 266, 288
 Tanner, Ada 19-20, 90, 175
 Tanner, Denis Deane 19-20, 54-6, 68, 95, 157, 175-6, 227
 Tanner, Ethel Daisy 15, 21, 166, 176
 Tiffany, Earl 74-5, 179
 Van Trees, James 165-6
 Whitney, Charlotte 186-8, 190
 Windsor, Claire 16, 60, 102, 119-24, 166, 180, 266, 288
 Woolwine, Thomas 27, 33, 185-6, 188, 190-92, 194-5, 203-6, 206, 212, 219-22, 234-8, 244-5, 248, 254-5, 257, 269-70
 Wright, Alfred 160